



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/remarks-usaid-administrator-rajiv-shah-feed-future-global-forum-opening>

Remarks by USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah at the Feed the Future Global Forum Opening

[As prepared]

Good morning! Want to start by saying thank you. Some really wonderful, talented people have worked through the nights and many weekends to organize this Global Forum and launch this year's Progress Report.

This morning, every seat here is filled with invaluable champions and allies.

I see humanitarian, development, and government leaders from around the world—nearly 30 countries, in fact.

I see advocates from both sides of the aisle who recognize that the face of hunger is not a partisan issue—but a moral one, and one with great importance to our shared security and prosperity.

I see leaders from across the U.S. Government—who represent this Administration's new approach to tackling great challenges not by bureau or Agency, but with the full weight and expertise of the United States Government.

I see USAID Mission Directors and their teams, who are translating policy into results for the world's most vulnerable people every day.

They have just wrapped up our worldwide Mission Directors conference—an opportunity to share experiences and learn from one another. I'm very proud of them.

It is very fitting to begin with President Obama's words from his inaugural address in 2009—where before the world, he committed the full power, ingenuity, and resources of the United States government to ending hunger.

To fully understand how far we've come, I want to take you back to that day—and what the world had recently come through.

For more than 20 years, agriculture funding in development had been on the decline, leaving the world ill-prepared to cope with the growing challenge of food insecurity.

Rising fuel prices sent prices for basic staples—like wheat and rice—to all-time highs, casting tens of millions of people back to the brink of extreme poverty.

Food riots rocked countries from Senegal to Pakistan. Ten thousand people took to the streets in Dhaka. Cameroon saw worst unrest in 15 years. In a panic, countries implemented short-sighted policy responses like export controls that hurt trade and slowed growth.

Everywhere, a food, fuel, and economic crisis had shrouded the world with pessimism.

But the greatest impact wasn't felt in the halls of power, but in the bellies of starving children crying every night with hunger.

Without nutritious food, their bodies can't grow and their minds can't develop. They laugh and smile just like any kids, but their life-long potential is forever undermined.

They are pulled out of work. The boys are sent off to work and the girls sold off to husbands before they'll even old enough to fetch water alone.

The Washington Post covered the story of a hunger crisis in Niger that sent hundreds of young girls into forced marriage that closely resembled slavery.

The New York Times covered the story of Haitian children making and eating mudcakes to fill their empty bellies.

In this environment, President Obama took office determined to reverse course and give millions of people a pathway out of extreme poverty.

As one of his first foreign policy acts, President Obama launched Feed the Future.

Borne out of the President's pledge at the 2009 G-8 Summit in L'Aquila to mobilize at least \$3.5 billion towards global food security—spurring commitments of \$18.5 billion from other donors.

In the years since, not every country has met its commitments.

But the United States has. In fact, thanks to tremendous bipartisan support, we've even surpassed them—committing \$5 billion in the fight to end hunger and malnutrition.

Feed the Future was not just the commitment of money, but of a new approach. Instead of merely providing food aid in times of crises, we were applying a new model to turn agriculture into a business—one that especially worked for women.

Instead of trying to work everywhere at once, we chose partners selectively, based on their own commitments to policy reforms and willingness to invest in agriculture.

In fact, since 2010, we have phased out agricultural programs in more than 30 countries to focus on just 19 where we can have the biggest impact.

Four years later, I am proud to join you today to launch the 2014 Feed the Future Progress Report that delivers on the President's commitment to the world.

Let me just share with you a few topline numbers:

- 6.7 million farmers applied new technologies that put them on a path out of extreme poverty
- Improved nutrition for 12.5 million children—ensuring they have food to fuel their minds as much as their bodies
- 4 million hectares—twice the size of Massachusetts—transformed
- Leveraged \$7 billion in investment from 160 companies—the majority from local African firms, including farmer-owned businesses.
- Dozens of countries have made critical reforms.

What does all this mean on the ground?

When President Obama visited Senegal a year ago, he met a farmer named Nimna, who started a women's farming cooperative in her community with support from Feed the Future. Nimna's success represents those of farmers across the nation.

In the last year, more than 17,000 Senegalese farmers and small entrepreneurs benefited from nearly \$20 million in rural loans and grants.

Meanwhile, our friends at the Millennium Challenge Corporation are rehabilitating the large-scale irrigation system in the Senegal River Valley Delta.

Senegal is now a member of the New Alliance for Food Security, a global public-private partnership launched by President Obama at the G8 Summit at Camp David.

These profits for farmers have quickly translated into results for the entire country: In the last 20 years alone, the rate of extreme poverty has fallen by 55 percent.

Senegal is not alone.

In Haiti, where children once ate mudcakes, Feed the Future worked closely with smallholder farmers to improve productively despite tough planting seasons that weathered two storms and a drought. We increased rice yields by 129 percent; corn by 340 percent; and beans by 100 percent.

Last year, the nationwide demographic health survey released impressive results: including steady increase in childhood vaccinations and steady decrease in chronic malnutrition. The number of children suffering from acute malnutrition halved.

In Ethiopia, we recently partnered with DuPont and local agriculture cooperative to help 35,000 maize farmers increase yields by 50 percent. Private sector investment has encouraged the government to liberalize its seed sector.

Guts Ago Industry—a local Ethiopian company—sources from 10,000 farmers and develops a ready-to-use therapeutic food made with chickpeas.

All told, in the last year alone, we leveraged nearly \$70 million in private sector investment for Ethiopian farmers to grow their businesses and hire new employees—and lifted 1.7 million children beyond the threat of starvation and malnutrition.

In 10 years alone, Ethiopia has brought the extreme poverty rate down 20 percentage points—a rate that has helped spur the growth of the economy at an astounding 9 percent a year.

These results have come not just from just teaching farmers how to plant, but also from helping them learn how to run successful businesses. That means forging PPPs to make sure the entire chain—from farm to market to table—is profitable.

That is why President Obama announced the New Alliance at G8.

Since then, Grow Africa Reports: of 7.2 billion in planned investments, \$970 million of investment were made in the last year alone. 33,000 jobs created. 2.6 million smallholder farmers reached.

If there is still any doubt that we are on the verge of a new Green Revolution, *the Economist* published an article just last week describing the transformation underway on small farms around the world, as farmers plant improved seed that are resilient in the face of heat, drought, pests, and disease.

From the research labs of the world's elite universities to the fields of poor farmers, Feed the Future is driving this scientific revolution.

Playing a leading role is ensuring that the latest technologies don't just sit in a research lab, but get sown into the fields of those who need the most.

We have more than doubled our research investments—developing and deploying more than 34 new drought-tolerant maize varieties in the last five years alone.

And today, I am pleased to announce a new \$5 million research partnership with Texas A&M dedicated to eliminating coffee rust, a plant disease that has caused more than \$1 billion in economic damage and threatens how millions of Central Americans earn their living.

Today, farmers face the worst outbreak in Latin America's history. To help stop the crisis before it worsens—or spreads—our partnership will not only develop new rust-resistant coffee varieties, but also strengthen the capacity of the region's own coffee institutions.

To pioneer similar breakthroughs, we have established 23 Feed the Future Innovation Laboratories led by U.S. universities—the bedrock of our nation's agricultural capacity and expertise.

Taken together, these investments are lifting families out of extreme poverty and sowing the seeds of productive, profitable agricultural market that will need to feed 9 billion mouths by 2050.

At the end of the day, progress does not come from new seeds alone, but leaders who have the courage to make tough, important decisions.

Gathered from around the world this week, our Agency's Mission Directors represent just this deeply committed and talented cohort.

They aren't alone.

At their side are leaders from a dozen U.S. Government Agencies, each of which brings a highly unique and invaluable set of skills and partners to our shared mission.

USADF's food security programs helped create more than \$21 million in new economic activities.

The Peace Corps has fielded more than 12,000 volunteers who help communities make sustainable changes in how they cultivate their food and irrigate their lands.

USDA formally launched our government's open agricultural data initiative and improved statistical systems in half-a-dozen

Feed the Future focus countries.

We are proud to sign an MOU with USDA to improve coordination between our education programs and USDA's school feeding programs that have nurtured millions of students through McGovern-Dole.

The MCC moved forward on Compacts from Mozambique to Tanzania and tremendously strengthened the rigor of our approach to monitoring and evaluation.

The Department of State has continued to help foster major policy changes that support global and local food security goals.

Managed by the Department of Treasury, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) brought total multilateral funding to \$961 million for small businesses in 31 countries.

From the Department of State to Commerce to Treasury; from the U.S. Geological Survey to OPIC, Feed the Future truly represents the contributions of entire United States Government.

And lest you get the impression that the United States is in this fight alone, we aren't. Across the world, partner countries have stepped up and global institutions have stepped forward.

Tanzania removed its export ban; Burkina Faso passed two significant laws governing public-private partnership; and Rwanda has strengthened its focus on supporting farmer cooperatives.

The World Bank, IFAD, WFP, and FAO are all rethinking how they can promote public-private partnership and commodity exchanges. The World Bank is playing a leadership role in the development of Climate Smart Alliance for Agriculture. IFAD is contributing to the New Alliance ICT Extension Challenge—funding one of the six countries themselves.

All are providing intellectual leadership—and support to the G7/G20—to strengthen evidence-based discussion. And all are advancing a post-2015 development agenda anchored by a focus on ending hunger and extreme poverty.

This morning's launch of the Progress Report does not just celebrate the leadership of our partners or the impact of our investments.

It does something arguably much more important: it upholds our commitment to closely monitor, measure, and publically report on our work.

The Report's findings are grounded in a robust management system for gathering and disseminating timely, accurate data that measures everything from household income to the participation of women to the prevalence of stunting.

This month, we are proud to launch the Women's Empowerment Agriculture Index Baseline Report—which provides a comprehensive analysis of findings from 13 countries.

I encourage you to read the report, but its central finding confirms what we all suspect: that—on average—women are twice as disempowered as men. At the extreme, they are three times as disempowered.

The report also finds that across the world, women are most held back by not having access to credit or group memberships in cooperatives or associations. I mention these especially because they are as striking as they are solvable. And we must work together to ensure that women have the same access to capital, technologies, and leadership positions as men.

Just as country-based Demographic and Health Surveys helped dramatically expand monitoring capabilities in global health, Feed the Future's new open data platform will transform our knowledge and inform cutting-edge approaches.

A few months ago, when President Obama arrived at the Vatican, he presented Pope Francis with a small chest filled with fruit and vegetable seeds from the White House garden.

It was a poignant gift, symbolizing the President's own commitment to this deeply moral mission as well as power of seeds to feed a global community and sow a bright future.

We have an exceptional mission, and we do pursue it with some exceptional people. But 842 million people—the great majority of whom are children—will still go to sleep hungry tonight.

Over the next three days, as you share experiences and ideas, I encourage you to ask yourself and each other: are we transforming fast enough against our aspirations?

As this impressive report shows, there is no question we have the tools: massive capital, cutting-edge innovations, high-

impact partnerships and—perhaps most importantly—unprecedented presidential and bipartisan leadership. The rest is up to us—the leaders in this room and in cities around the world. I look forward to carrying forward this conversation with you over the next three days.

Encourage you to visit the Marketplace, where you can see many of the innovations and learn about the partnerships making a difference on the ground today.

Tonight, on the Hill, we're going to be joining a tremendous group of bipartisan colleagues to discuss how this decade long endeavor will only succeed if we stay focused and inspired.

And later this week, at the Chicago Council on Thursday, we'll have an exciting announcement on our strategic vision for giving all children the nutrition they need to survive and thrive.

Thank you.

These remarks originally [appeared](#) on the USAID website.